**Writing Thesis Statements**

**Why do people make so much fuss over one sentence?**

No single sentence will pester you quite so much as the thesis statement. Often you’ll find it is both the first sentence you write and the last sentence you re-write while constructing your essay.

Why so much fuss? Perhaps teachers make so much of the thesis statement because, if done correctly, it fills so many responsibilities.

The thesis statement must assert your point, suggest your evidence, and structure your argument, all in one. This is necessary for a good reason. If you can summarize your paper in one sentence, you’re more likely to have a tightly-constructed, concise, and readable essay.

**Find a general topic for your paper, and then narrow it down.**

The first step in writing an essay is finding a topic you enjoy. The next step is to narrow your topic into a single view or theory that you will explore and explain. For instance, you may be very interested in the topic of old wives’ tales. This is an interesting theme, but it is very broad.

What is specifically interesting about wives’ tales? Perhaps you can narrow your interest into a statement like this:

Many old wives’ tales originated hundreds of years ago, yet some have been based on solid science and have led to real cures or medicines.

That is specific. It also asserts your view and provides an opening for evidence. With solid research you can come up with several examples to support this statement.

**Don’t be afraid of controversy.**

In an argumentative essay, a thesis is a declarative sentence that takes a stance. If you feel strongly about a social issue and you believe you can back it up, then go ahead and do it. Just be sure you back up your stance with facts and not opinions. Don’t use cruel or insulting statements, just the facts.

Be aware that there will always be someone who disagrees with your stance. That’s what makes life interesting. That’s also what makes essays interesting!

**Don’t be ambiguous.**

You may decide to take a stance, but you can’t find facts to back up your argument. If so, you might be on the right track, but you just need to focus a little more.

For instance, you might want to argue that music classes should be mandatory for all students. You may believe this, but can you back it up?

First, do a little research. You may find evidence that children who study music at a very young age tend to do well in math and science later in life. Based on this research, you may want to narrow your thesis to reflect this more narrow argument.

**Do re-visit and re-write your thesis, when necessary.**

Your thesis sentence should be flexible, until you are finished with your research and your writing. It is not unusual for writers to revise the thesis sentence several times. As you research your topic, you may be frustrated to find some fascinating research that fits just *outside* the boundary of your thesis.

This is difficult. You can decide to exclude this research or you could decide to change your thesis. If you include it, be sure it is strong enough to support an entire paragraph.

The best approach is to collect all the research you can, first. Then sort the facts into categories—either on paper or in your head. These categories will become your paragraphs.

Narrow and revise your thesis as you go. Once you’ve completed your essay, check a final time to see that your thesis fulfills the following roles.

* It makes a clear and specific statement.
* It indicates the direction of your thoughts.
* It sets a stage.
* It provides structure.
* It is supported by the body paragraphs.

Reminder: If you make a final change to your thesis, always double-check your concluding paragraph. It might need adjustment, as well.